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ABSTRACT

This report compiles recent research showing that quality child care and early education can greatly reduce crime and argues that California is in the middle of a child care crisis, with a shortage of quality, affordable care. Chapter 1 of the report presents research showing that at-risk children who participate in quality child care programs are much less likely to commit crime and have serious behavior problems than children who are not enrolled in those programs. Chapter 2 argues that, faced with waiting lists and the high cost of child care, many working parents have no choice but to leave their children in a setting that in many circumstances amounts to little more than child storage. Chapter 3 presents evidence that most child care available in California falls short of the good quality necessary to effectively reduce crime and violence. Chapter 4 asserts that low-income working parents especially have difficulty finding affordable, quality care. Chapter 5 presents information on the underfunding of child care assistance programs in California. Chapter 6 argues that investing now in quality child care programs will yield such crime reductions and other benefits that California will have substantially more money for other purposes in the years ahead. Chapter 7 presents a call for action from California's leading sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys, and crime victims to make necessary investments in providing access to quality child care. The report concludes with recommendations for California policymakers. Appended is an overview of major California Child Care Assistance Programs. (Contains 94 endnotes.) (KB)

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California's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy

A Report from
FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA*

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Chief Burnham Matthews, Alameda Police Department
District Attorney Grover C. Trask, II, Riverside County
Alexandra Matteucci-Perkins, parent of a murdered child

Foreword By:

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FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA* is non-profit, non-partisan anti-crime organization led by California's sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victims dedicated to reducing crime by promoting public investments in programs proven to keep kids from becoming involved in crime. FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA* is part of the national FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS organization.

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FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS CALIFORNIA

State Director
Maryann O'Sullivan

Dear California Readers:

Like all the other sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and victims of crime who are part of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA*, we are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars. But we also know that no punishment after the fact can undo the agony crime leaves in its wake. Rigorous research, years of experience and plain common sense tell us that we can prevent crime by giving kids the right start in life.

This report shows that quality child care and early education are among our most powerful weapons against crime. Recent long-term studies show that kids who attend quality child care programs are less likely to become criminals than kids left out of these programs. On the other hand, poor quality early care multiplies the risk that children will grow up to be a threat to every family and to every community. Unfortunately the families that have the hardest time getting quality child care are those whose children would benefit most from it, and are most at risk of becoming involved in crime without it.

This report reveals where California is falling short in its commitment to helping working families get quality child care. Fewer than one out of every five child care centers in California is rated as good quality. Child care teachers, paid too little, are leaving the field at an alarming rate. And programs to help low-income families afford child care are so underfunded that child care assistance is unavailable for over one million eligible children.

Every week, millions of parents need to go to work and leave their children in some form of child care where their developing minds and emotions are being powerfully shaped by the quality of that care. The question is whether that care will be adequate to help them learn to get along with others and to start school ready to succeed, or whether it will be care that damages their development and puts every California family at greater risk of becoming a victim of crime.

This report should help every California voter and policymaker understand that we *all* have a vital stake in making sure that all children have access to quality child care.

Sincerely,

Sheriff William Kolender
San Diego County

Chief Burnham Matthews
Alameda Police Department

District Attorney Grover C. Trask, II
Riverside County

Alexandra Matteucci-Perkins
The Joseph Matteucci Foundation for
Youth Non-Violence

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Special thanks is owed to FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA* Policy Director Brian Lee for taking the lead in preparing this report, and to State Director Maryann O'Sullivan, Project Assistant Lauren Zeichner, and intern Jennifer Chen for their support, and to Sanford Newman, Bill Christeson, Phil Evans and Tim Mills of the national office.

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David and Lucile Packard Foundation • James Irvine Foundation • Penney Family Fund • California Consumer Protection Foundation

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California's Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy

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Foreword

Preventing Today's California Children From Becoming Tomorrow's Criminals

By T. Berry Brazelton and Peter Greenwood

The quality of child care and early education available in California has a tremendous impact on every child, on whether he or she behaves or "acts out," excels in school or drops out, and transitions into adulthood as a productive citizen or as a dangerous criminal. Nurturing, stimulating child care teaches youngsters to get along with others, to care about others, and to start school ready to succeed, and it helps them become the contributing citizens and good neighbors we all want them to be. We know that the basis for which way a child's future will go is determined in the first few years of life. But today many parents must both work and leave their children in child care during this crucial period.

Scientific research tracking children for up to two decades shows that at-risk children enrolled in quality child care programs early in life are far less likely to grow up to be criminals, and far more likely to become productive adults, than similar children who did not receive quality child care. These investments pay for themselves many times over through proven reductions in crime, remedial education, and welfare dependency. We must provide excellent child care for every child and for every working family.

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA* is a welcome new voice calling attention to the critical importance of quality child care programs. FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS' sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victims know firsthand the dangers of neglecting our most at-risk children in their most vulnerable early years. Yet rather than simply focusing on today's criminals, the law enforcement leaders and crime victims draw on their experiences and the latest scientific research to show how California can prevent today's children from becoming tomorrow's criminals.

This report should be must reading for every policymaker in California.

T. Berry Brazelton, M.D., Professor Emeritus at Harvard Medical School, is America's best-known pediatrician. He is the author of over 200 scientific papers and 28 books. Among Dr. Brazelton's books is "Infants and Mothers" which has been read by more than one million American families and has been translated into 18 languages.

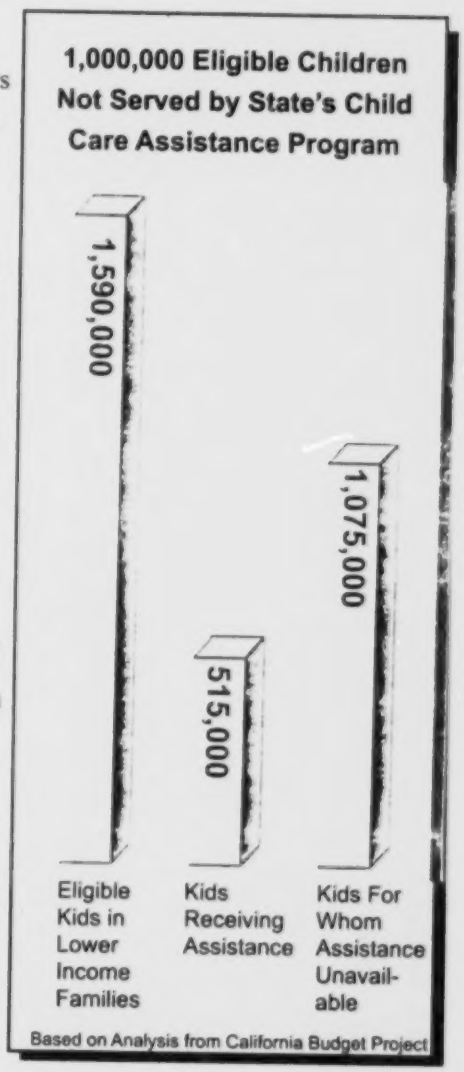
Peter W. Greenwood, Ph. D., is president of Greenwood and Associates and he is the former Director of the RAND Corporation's Criminal Justice Program. Dr. Greenwood is past President of the California Association of Criminal Justice Research and he has served on the faculties of Caltech, the Claremont Graduate School, the RAND Graduate School, and the University of Southern California.

Executive Summary

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA* is an anti-crime organization led by California's leading sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victims. This report compiles recent ground-breaking research showing that quality child care and early education can greatly reduce crime and reveals that California is in the middle of a child care crisis, with a tragic shortage of quality, affordable care. The report's findings are as follows:

Chapter 1: Quality Child Care and Early Education Prevent Crime. Recent research shows that at-risk children who participate in quality child care programs are much less likely to become criminals and have serious behavior problems than children who are not enrolled in those programs.

- A large 14-year study of children who had been enrolled in government-funded Child-Parent Centers shows they were half as likely to have two or more arrests as teens, compared to children not in the program.
- Children from North Carolina's "Smart Start" child care centers initiative were only about half as likely as comparison children to have serious behavior problems in kindergarten.
- A comprehensive study of child care centers in California and three other states shows that at-risk kids who attend good quality child care programs have no more behavior problems at age eight than children of college-educated parents who attend good quality programs.
- These recent studies replicate the success of smaller, model programs such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool program. A 22-year study of that program showed that denying at-risk children quality child care programs multiplied by five times the risk that they will be chronic lawbreakers as adults.
- Quality child care also promotes school-readiness. For example, compared to the control group, participants in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program had significantly higher high school grades, scored higher on literacy tests at age 19 and were more likely to earn a high school diploma.


1,000,000 Eligible Children Not Served by State's Child Care Assistance Program
1,590,000
515,000
1,075,000
Eligible Kids in Lower Income Families
Kids Receiving Assistance
Kids For Whom Assistance Unavailable
Based on Analysis from California Budget Project

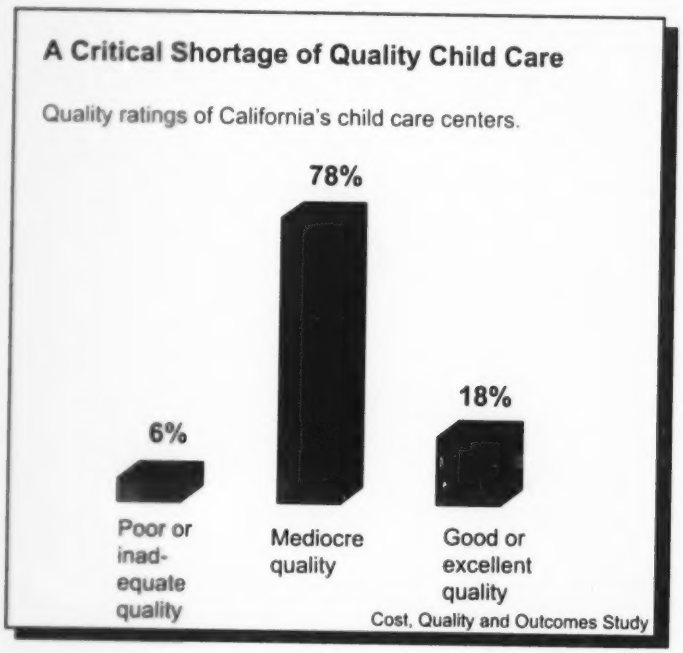
Chapter 2: Child Storage Isn't Child Care—Quality Matters. Faced with waiting lists and the high cost of child care, many working parents have no choice but to leave their children in a setting that in many circumstances amounts to little more than child storage.

Chapter 3: Too Much of California's Child Care Flunks Quality Standards. Most child care available in California falls short of the good quality necessary to effectively reduce crime and violence.

- Fewer than one in five child care centers in California is rated as good quality, and the ratings for family child care homes are no better.
- Only one in 25 of California's child care centers has been certified to meet quality standards set by nationally recognized agencies. That's less than half the mediocre national average.
- California's child care teachers, the key to quality care, are so underpaid that it is difficult to attract enough good teachers, and even harder to retain them. Each year, about one in three child care teachers moves to another job.

Chapter 4: Too Many Families Cannot Afford or Find Adequate Child Care and Early Education. Low-income working parents especially have difficulty finding affordable, quality care.

- Care for an infant and a preschooler costs nearly $14,000, almost $2,000 more than a full-time minimum wage worker earns.



- Sending an infant to a child care center costs a family nearly six times more than the annual cost of tuition for sending a child to a California State University school and two-thirds more than sending a child to college at a University of California school.
- California families pay 20% more for child care and pay a higher percentage of their annual income for child care than the national average.
- Low-income neighborhoods are hardest hit by persistent child care shortages.

Chapter 5: California Falls Short of the Investment in Quality Child Care Needed to Protect Public Safety: Financial Assistance Unavailable To Over One Million Eligible Kids. Child care assistance programs are so underfunded that:

- Assistance in paying for child care is unavailable for over *one million eligible children* from low-income working families. Many of them are either left languishing on waiting lists for assistance or don't even bother applying because assistance is not available.

- While California is fully funding the child care needs of families on or moving off welfare, the State is denying financial aid to pay for child care to many equally low-income working families who have not been on welfare.

- Publicly-funded child care facilities have a harder time than ever before providing quality child care because they have to stretch each dollar thinner. The amount that the State reimburses them for each low-income child has fallen far behind the increased cost of living over the past 20 years.

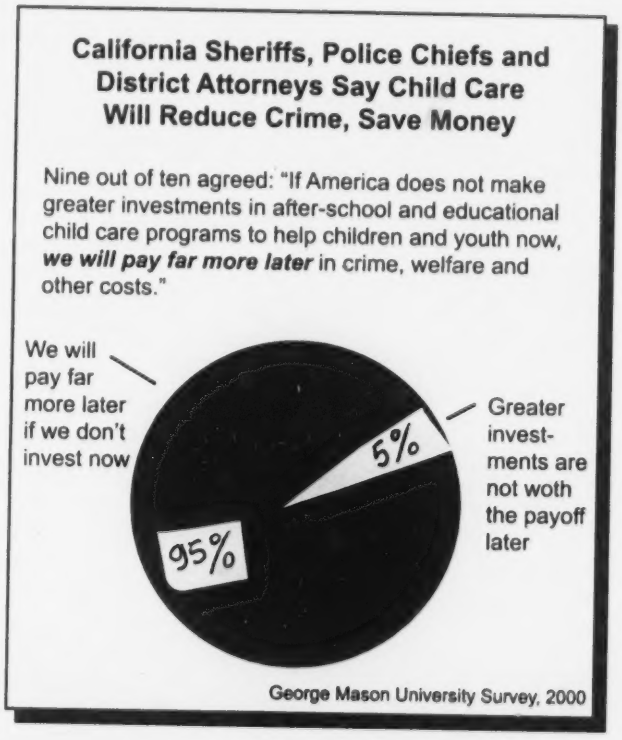
- Initiatives to improve "quality" get inadequate funding.

Chapter 6: Penny-Wise, Pound-Foolish Policy Choices: Wasting Money and Lives. Investing now in quality child care programs will yield such crime reductions and other benefits that the State will have substantially more money for other purposes in the years ahead.

- Every dollar invested in the High/ Scope Perry Preschool program saved the public $7.16 in crime costs, welfare dependency, and other savings.

- If all of the three and four year olds from low-income families in California today attended programs like Perry Preschool for two years, this would add up to an estimated *$19 billion* in government savings

- The Child-Parent Centers program saved the government, the public, and the participants combined, almost $5 for every dollar invested, including $2.31 in savings to the government alone per dollar invested.


California Sheriffs, Police Chiefs and District Attorneys Say Child Care Will Reduce Crime, Save Money
Nine out of ten agreed: "If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare and other costs."
We will pay far more later if we don't invest now
5%
95%
Greater invest-ments are not woth the payoff later
George Mason University Survey, 2000

Chapter 7: Recommendations From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call For Action. The State's leading sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victims are calling on California's public officials to make necessary investments in providing access to quality child care.

- In a recent survey of California sheriffs, police chiefs, and district attorneys, 95% agreed that if we fail to make greater investments in educational child care and after school programs now, "we will pay far more later" in crime, welfare and other costs.

- When asked to select which of several strategies would have "the biggest impact on reducing youth violence," 75% of California's law enforcement leaders picked providing more educational child care and after school programs—*four* times as many as those who selected hiring more police officers to investigate juvenile crimes, prosecuting more juveniles as adults, or installing more metal detectors and surveillance cameras in schools.

- The California State Sheriffs' Association, California Police Chiefs Association, California District Attorneys Association, and California Peace Officers' Association have all called on government to guarantee all kids access to quality child care as a key step to reduce crime and violence.

To prevent crime, save lives and make every California family safer, law enforcement leaders and victims of violence call on California policymakers to:

- Increase funding to make financial aid to pay for child care available to all eligible low-income families within the next 5 years.

- Make quality preschool programs readily available to all three and four year olds.

- Improve the quality of child care by increasing the amount that the government pays for child care for each low-income child to catch up with the increased cost of living over the past 20 years

- Encourage the training and retention of child care staff through increased compensation and benefits.

- Adopt a child care master plan to establish long-range priorities.

1: Quality Child Care and Early Education Prevents Crime

Rigorous behavioral studies, hard experience and brain research tell the same story: in the first several years of life, children's intellects and emotions are being powerfully shaped.

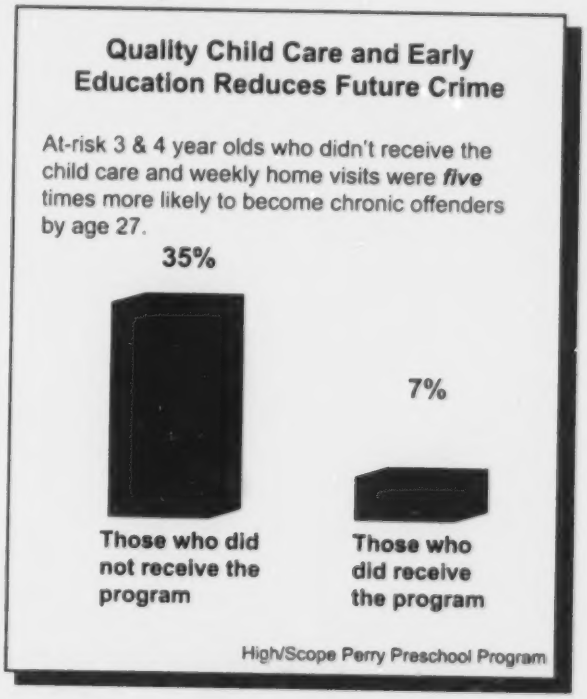
Both learning and the physical growth and "wiring" of the brain proceed at an astounding pace during these years.[1] Learning, of course, continues throughout life, and another similar spurt of brain development occurs in adolescence. But the stimulation and nurturing the child receives during the first years have an enormous and lasting impact.

Recent brain research reinforces years of behavioral research showing that these factors occurring in the early years of a child's life have a substantial impact on brain function at age 12, and an even greater impact by age 15.[2]

The child care programs which have proven most effective in preventing future delinquency and crime are those that supplement quality developmental day care with efforts to coach parents in parenting skills and support them in addressing the challenges of parenthood.[3] For example:

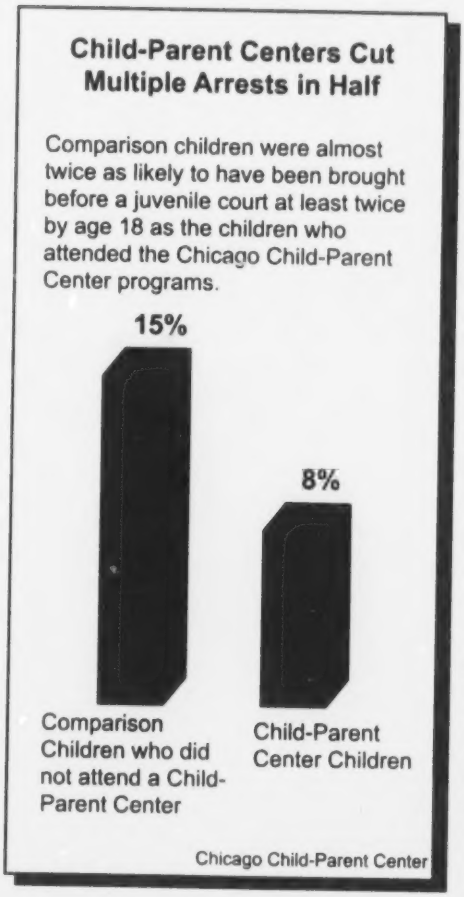
High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. In Ypsilanti, Michigan, the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation randomly divided low-income three- and four-year-olds into two groups. Half received no special services, while the others were enrolled in a quality preschool program, including a weekly home visit, until they started kindergarten. When the children reached age 27, arrest records showed that those who had received quality preschooling were only one-fifth as likely to be "chronic offenders," with more than four arrests.[4]

In other words, those who were denied the quality preschool and parenting education visitor program as preschoolers were *five* times more likely to become chronic


Quality Child Care and Early Education Reduces Future Crime
At-risk 3 & 4 year olds who didn't receive the child care and weekly home visits were five times more likely to become chronic offenders by age 27.
35%
7%
Those who did not receive the program
Those who did receive the program
High/Scope Perry Preschool Program

lawbreakers in adulthood!

Syracuse University Family Development Program. Researchers found that subsequent delinquency was cut dramatically when families were provided quality child care, parenting-education home visits, and other services beginning prenatally and continuing until the children began elementary school. Ten years later:


Child-Parent Centers Cut Multiple Arrests in Half
Comparison children were almost twice as likely to have been brought before a juvenile court at least twice by age 18 as the children who attended the Chicago Child-Parent Center programs.
15%
8%
Comparison Children who did not attend a Child-Parent Center
Child-Parent Center Children
Chicago Child-Parent Center

- Among those children who had not received the early childhood services, nearly one in five had already been charged with offenses. Nearly 1 in 10 were already "chronic offenders," with more than four arrests or charges of being ungovernable. And many of these offenses were serious.

- Among those children who *had* received the extra services, only one in twenty had even been charged with being ungovernable, and only 1.5% had actually been delinquent.[5]

In other words, failing to provide these babies and toddlers with quality child care and related services multiplied by ten times the risk that they would become delinquent as teens.

The bottom line for law enforcement and crime victims is that providing these proven "right-start" services dramatically reduces the risk that children will grow up to become criminals. Failing to provide kids with these services sharply increases crime and costs lives.

Recent Studies Confirm Impact On Crime

Three recent studies confirm that these results are not limited to small, model programs.

1. **Chicago Child-Parent Centers**: If there were any doubt that a major government-funded initiative could produce results similar to those of High/Scope's Perry program, it has been erased by the recent results from a long-term study of Chicago's Child-Parent Centers (CPC), which provide services including preschool and parent coaching. Almost 1,000 at-risk kids who had been enrolled in 20 of these centers were compared at age 18 to very

similar children who received all-day kindergarten but not the preschool and parent coaching program. Those who had not been in CPC were 60% more likely (26% vs. 16%) to have at least one juvenile arrest, and nearly *twice* as likely (15% vs. 8%) to have two or more such arrests.[6]

2. **North Carolina Smart Start**: North Carolina's pioneering Smart Start program is spending over $200 million a year on enhancing access to quality child care, quality improvement, and other child-care-related services for children under six. A recent study by the University of North Carolina's Frank Porter Graham Center shows that children in the child care centers receiving substantial quality-improvement help from Smart Start (the Smart Start Direct centers) were only about half as likely to have serious behavior problems in kindergarten.[7]

The flip side of that statement is equally telling: Kids in centers not receiving the Smart Start services were nearly *twice* as likely to be disruptive in kindergarten.[8] This is important because

Quality Child Care Promotes School-Readiness

The benefits of quality child care programs are not limited to crime prevention. A quality child care program can provide a child the skills needed not only to stay away from crime, but also to succeed in school and become a responsible adult.

For example, compared to the control group, participants in the High/Scope Perry Preschool program had significantly higher high school grades, scored higher on literacy tests at age 19, and were more likely to earn a high school diploma.[12] Participants were also half as likely to be placed in a class for the educable mentally impaired.

Similarly, children enrolled in Chicago's Child-Parent Centers had higher average test scores in math and reading during the elementary grades, were held back in school 35% less often, and had 26% greater high school graduation rates than children outside the program.[13]

The benefits of quality child care and its impact on school success pay off into adulthood. For example, when the High/Scope Perry toddlers became adults, they were far better able to support themselves and their families than those left out of the program. By age 27 the children who received preschool and home visitor services were four times more likely to earn over $24,000 a year. Thery were also half as likely to be receiving welfare or other means-tested social services as adults. And participating females had one-third fewer out-of-wedlock births than the control group.[14]

research consistently shows that children who exhibit problem behaviors in the early grades are at far greater risk than other children of becoming teen delinquents and adult criminals.[9]

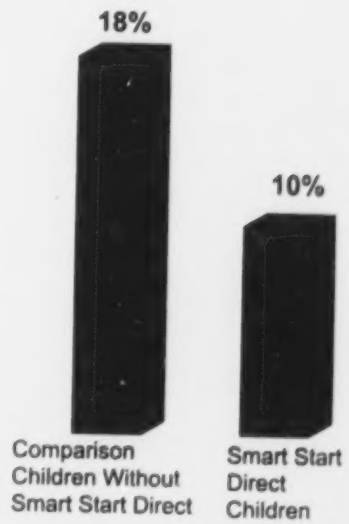
'Early care and nurture have a decisive, long-lasting impact on how people develop, their ability to learn, and their capacity to regulate their own emotions'

3. **Cost Quality Outcomes**: A nationwide study of child care confirms the point that quality matters when it comes to problem behaviors later in life. *The Children of the Cost Quality Study Go to School* research was conducted in California and three other states by a team from four different universities, including UCLA. The study first rated child care centers for quality. Years later, when the children who had been in the various centers were eight years old, their behavior was evaluated.

Children of high school-educated mothers who received good quality child care had no more behavior problems at age eight than the children of college-educated mothers who also received good quality child care. But, children of high school-educated mothers who received poor quality child care had significantly more behavior problems at age eight than all children who received good quality care and children of college-educated mothers who received poor quality child care.[10] Good quality child care levels the playing field.

Problem Behaviors Cut in Half by North Carolina's Smart Start:

Comparison children were almost twice as likely to score poorly on behavior problems in Kindergarten as kids who attended Smart Start centers that received all the quality supports (Smart Start Direct).



Frank Porter Graham Center

Taken as a whole, these research breakthroughs make clear that "early care and nurture have a decisive, long-lasting impact on how people develop, their ability to learn, and their capacity to regulate their own emotions."[11] California needs to put the teachings of this science to work.[15]

2: Child Storage Isn't Child Care: Quality Matters

The programs which have been proven to have the most substantial impact in reducing antisocial behavior, delinquency, and adult crime are *quality* child care and early education programs.

But faced with waiting lists and the high cost of child care, many working parents have no choice but to leave their children in a setting that in many circumstances amounts to little more than child storage. Recent research makes clear that quality child care must do far more than keep children safe from immediate physical injury. Quality child care and early education stimulates and nurtures children to maximize their intellectual and emotional development.[16]

Just as good quality care can markedly reduce the risk of delinquency and other unhappy outcomes, low-quality care leads to increased risk of such results.[17]

'Just as high-quality care can markedly reduce the risk of delinquency and other unhappy outcomes, low-quality care leads to increased risk of such results'

Yet, unable to locate or afford quality care, many working parents are obliged to accept child care arrangements that are far from ideal. For example:

- They may leave their children with unlicensed friends or neighbors who lack training or may be caring for too many babies and toddlers to provide the nurturing and stimulation they need. Of course, for some families leaving a child with a trusted relative, nanny, or babysitter is the preferred choice for child care and, indeed, may be the best arrangement. But for many families, especially low-income families, it's the only choice—in other words, they have no choice at all.

- They may send their children to low cost programs that lack experienced staff, suffer a high staff turnover rate, and offer minimal resources to meet the needs of children and families.

- As children reach school age desperate parents may reluctantly allow them to "take care of themselves" after school. According to a recent study, "self-care"—a.k.a. "home alone"—is the primary child care arrangement for more than one out of every seven California children ages 10 to 12 with working mothers.[18]

California can no more afford to accept child care that is merely "custodial" than it could accept assigning some children to public schools that are "custodial" rather than "instructional."

The components of good quality child care and early education are well-recognized. They include:

- Adequately-compensated child care staff;
- High levels of parental involvement, such as parent coaching;
- Well-trained staff;
- Stable staff (low turnover);
- Appropriate staff/child ratios;
- Appropriate staff/child interactions and curriculum; and
- A safe and healthy environment.[19]

'California still has a long way to go towards implementing these proven standards for good quality child care'

In addition, particularly in a state with as many ethnic populations as California, staff must be able to communicate in both English and the language of non-English speaking parents.

Many of these components are in place in the programs that demonstrate a significant crime prevention impact. Staff in these successful programs are well-trained and supervised; staff-child ratios allow for a safe, nurturing and enriching environment, and most of the programs include parenting-education components.[20]

California still has a long way to go towards implementing these proven standards for good quality child care and early education.

3: Too Much of California's Child Care Flunks Quality Standards

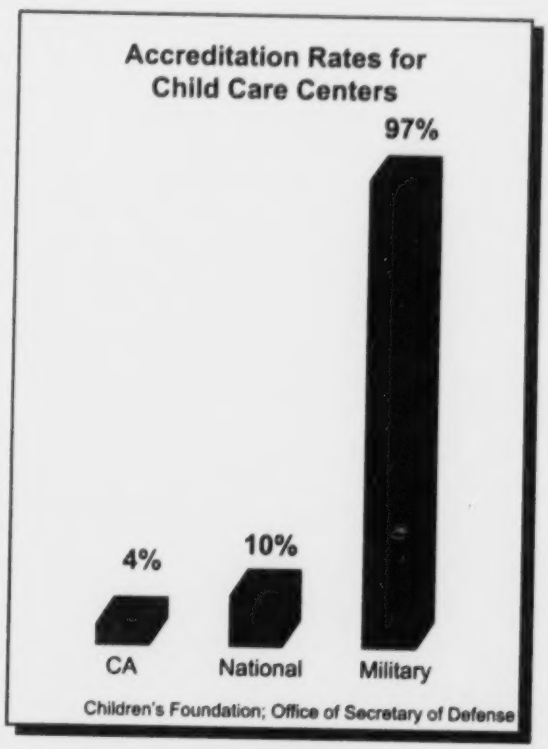
Only One in Five of California's Child Care Centers Is Found to Be Good Quality

According to a recent national survey by the Urban Institute, 19% of California children under five with working mothers are in child care centers.[21] A comprehensive 1995 report rated nearly one hundred randomly-selected child care centers in California. It ranked quality along a wide range, from inadequate quality ("children's needs for health and safety not met; no warmth and support from adults observed; no learning encouraged") to excellent quality ("health and safety needs fully met, warmth and support for all children; learning in many ways through interesting, fun activities; children encouraged to become independent; teacher plans for children's individual learning needs; adults have close, personal relationships with each child").

The study found that fewer than one in five centers–18%–were "good" or "excellent" quality, and that the great majority were only "mediocre" in quality.[22]

An Accreditation Rate One-Half the National Average

California's low accreditation rate does little to inspire confidence. Organizations like the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, the primary accrediting body for centers) certify child care centers that meet nationally-recognized measures of good quality. Facilities must apply for this accreditation. A study of California child care centers reinforces the obvious: accredited facilities rank higher in quality than unaccredited ones.[23] Yet in California, through 2000, just over 4% of licensed child care centers were accredited by the NAEYC.[24] This is less than one half of the (still inadequate) national rate of 10%. Among all states, California ranks 36th.[25]



What kinds of child care are available?

California has both licensed and unlicensed child care arrangements. To be licensed, a facility must meet certain minimum health and safety standards.

***Licensed child care* includes:**[26]

Child care centers provide care in non-residential facilities and have structured hours of operation. Over 9,000 child care centers in California have a combined capacity to serve approximately 560,000 children.[27]

Family Child Care Homes provide child care for unrelated children in the home of the provider and can serve no more than 14 children. Over 30,000 family child care homes in California have a combined capacity to serve approximately 260,000 children.[28]

License-exempt care: Types of child care that do not require a license include care in a child's own home, care by a relative, some public recreation programs, care for school-age children at their own school, and care in a provider's home when the provider cares for her own children as well as the children from only one other family.

Quality No Better In Other Child Care Settings

According to the Urban Institute, sixteen percent of California's children under five with working moms get child care not in child care centers but in "family child care homes," in which a child care provider can serve up to 14 unrelated children. Research shows that quality in these family child care homes is about the same as in centers.[29] While centers and family child care homes generally must be licensed and therefore must meet minimum health and safety standards, it is clear that licensing alone is not a guarantee of quality.

The 65% of California children under five with working moms who are not cared for in child care centers or family child care homes are in license-exempt child care settings, such as with an acquaintance who is at home caring for another child.[30] This is a higher percentage than in any of the12 large and geographically diverse states in the Urban Institute study.[31] While some license-exempt child care providers (those serving low-income children on public child care assistance) are required to undergo a background check and complete a health and safety self-certification form, license-exempt settings are never monitored for basic health and safety, let alone for good quality standards, and very few government resources are being directed to improve the quality of care of these settings.

Poor Compensation Makes it Hard to Hire or Keep Qualified Child Care Staff

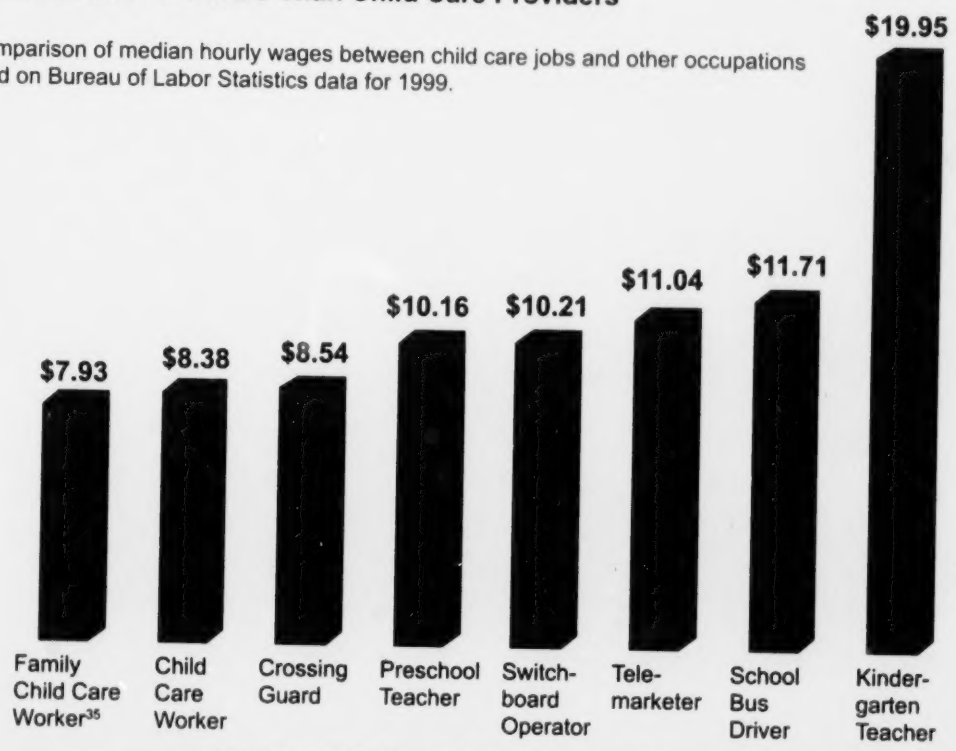
The quality of child care largely hinges on attracting and retaining highly-motivated, well-trained, capable child care teachers who know how to foster the growth and development of young children. Just hiring or training these kinds of teachers is not enough if they are constantly leaving the field to take higher paying jobs.

In California, most child care experts and informed policymakers agree that the most significant factor compromising the overall quality of care is poor compensation of child care staff.[32] (Generally speaking, the staff of a child care facility includes teachers and lesser qualified aides or workers.)

- California child care workers[33] earn near-poverty wages, little more than $8 per hour—$17,430 per year —less than the salary of a crossing guard;[34]

Telemarketers Paid More Than Child Care Providers

A comparison of median hourly wages between child care jobs and other occupations based on Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 1999.



Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates: California

- Child care or preschool "teachers" [36] earn on average just over $10 per hour—$21,130 per year—less than a school bus driver, and only about half the salary of a kindergarten teacher;[37] and

- Fewer than one-half of all child care staff receive fully-paid health insurance coverage.[38]

This low compensation helps explain much of an alarming annual staff turnover rate that statewide ranges from 28 to almost 40%.[39] When child care teachers and workers leave, their training and experience go with them. And young children, who need time to become comfortable with, and attached to, caregivers, may be less likely to form new attachments if they learn that those they have come to trust cannot be relied upon to stay. They experience turnover as loss.[40]

'California's thriving economy exacerbates the crisis in the child care workforce. Now more than ever before, qualified child care teachers and workers are leaving the field for higher paying jobs'

California's thriving economy exacerbates the crisis in the child care workforce. Now more than ever before, qualified child care teachers and workers are leaving the field for higher paying jobs. This reverses a long-standing trend wherein the *less* qualified child care workers were the ones who most tended to move on.[41]

Education reform also has taken its toll. With class size reduction fueling demand, and teacher salaries on the rise, talented child care workers are moving on to jobs as public school teachers.[42] The 2000-01 entry level teacher salary of $34,000 was up to twice as high as the average salary for the people asked to care for California's youngest and most vulnerable residents.[43] This minimum public school teacher salary was thousands more than that of a child care teacher with 10 years or more of experience who worked a longer day and year.

Good public school teachers are critical and this comparison in no way should be read to suggest that they are paid too much. The mystery is why anyone thinks California can attract adequate numbers of good child care teachers for such low salaries.

Failing Non-English Speaking Parents

Too few child care providers are effectively reaching out to families with non-English speaking parents. These parents have a hard time communicating with child care providers and finding child care facilities that provide their desired balance of instruction in English and their native language. According to one study, just

over one-third of California child care centers with Spanish-speaking children had Spanish-speaking teachers. And while one-third of accredited California centers served Chinese-speaking children, none employed Chinese-speaking teachers. Over half of the directors and one-third of the teaching staff in the study reported that parents had difficulty communicating with staff at their centers because of language barriers.[44] Since parental involvement is a key component of quality care, these barriers are clearly obstacles to quality care.

'In California even basic health and safety standards are not being vigorously enforced'

Inadequate Enforcement of Health and Safety Standards

Ensuring that minimal health and safety standards are being followed does not guarantee quality, but it is a prerequisite to quality care. However, it appears that in California even basic health and safety standards are not being vigorously enforced. According to a study by the U.S. General Accounting Office, child care facility inspections in California are among the least frequent in the country.[45] California has one of the smallest inspection staff to facility ratios in the country, with a caseload of 249 sites per inspector. Only five states have higher caseloads per inspector, and California's rate is more than *triple* the recommended level of 75 cases per inspector.[46]

California Lags Far Behind U.S. Military

The inadequate quality of California child care becomes starkly apparent when California's quality standards and safeguards are held up against what has been acclaimed a national model for quality, affordable care, the U.S. military's program.[47] California has a long way to go to meet the military's commitment to quality child care. For example:

- 97% of the military's child care centers are accredited, versus just 4% in California.[48]
- All full-time and part-time workers in the military receive health insurance, life insurance and retirement benefits; less than half of California child care workers even get fully-paid health insurance.[49]
- Staff turnover in the military is *lower* than California's turnover rate,[50] even though high staff turnover in the military is understandable given that 75% of its child care staff are spouses of military members, who are frequently transferred.[51]
- The military rigorously monitors its child care facilities, including quarterly unannounced inspections for centers and family child care homes.[52] In California, there is only one inspection per year for centers, and inspections less than once every two years for family child care homes.[53]

4: Too Many Families Cannot Afford or Find Adequate Care

From a law enforcement perspective, the child care crisis is especially severe because it strikes hardest at those most vulnerable—at-risk, particularly low-income, children. Shortchanging their child care increases the risk some of those children will grow up to pose a threat to the rest of us.

'Young families, most of whom are still near the lowest earning levels of their working lives, can no more afford to pay for quality child care than they could afford to pay the full cost of the education we provide children through public schools'

Yet many families, especially low-income families, have alarmingly limited choices when it comes to child care and early education. Many child care programs are financially—and geographically—out of reach for thousands of California's most at-risk children and youth. Young families, most of whom are still near the lowest earning levels of their working lives, can no more afford to pay for quality child care than they could afford to pay the full cost of the education we provide children through public schools.

Low-Income, At-Risk Children Benefit the Most from Quality Child Care—If They Are Lucky Enough to Get It

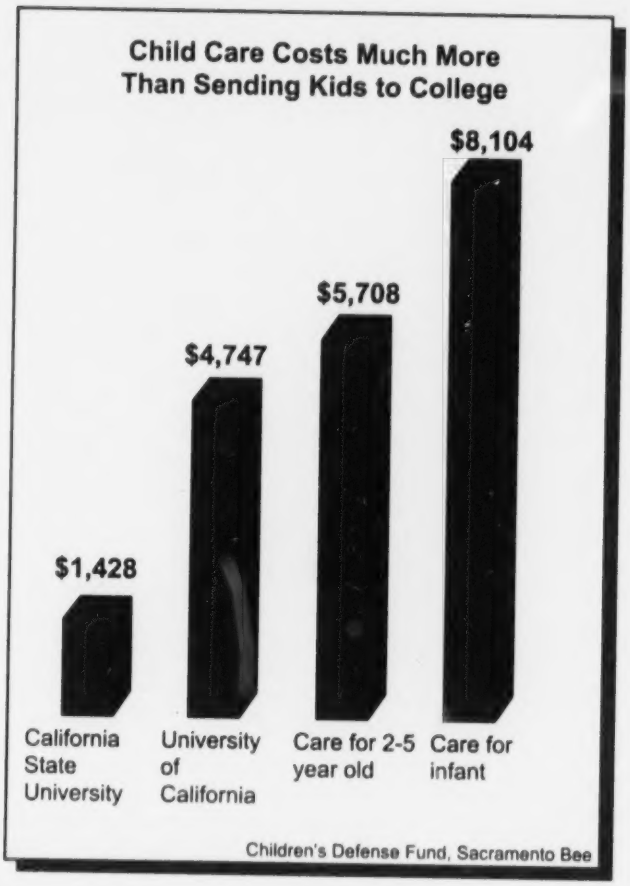
The sad irony is that at-risk children, for whom good quality child care and child development programs are least available, are exactly those who would derive the most benefit from them.

For example, research following children from preschool through second grade confirms that kids whose mothers have lower levels of education receive the greatest benefits from good quality child care and are most sensitive to the negative effects of poor quality care. Researchers from UCLA and other universities who conducted the Cost, Quality and Outcomes study found that poor quality child care made a lasting negative impact on the problem behaviors of children whose mothers had only a high-school education. On the other hand, the negative impact of poor quality care on the problem behaviors of children of college-educated mothers disappeared by age eight.[54]

High Child Care Costs Take the Biggest Toll on Low-Income Families

But the high cost of child care makes it extremely difficult for parents to access good quality care for the most at-risk kids. The average annual cost for an infant under two in a licensed child care

center in California is $8,104, and for a child age two through five is $5,708.[55] In many cities, these costs are far higher. Overall, sending an infant to a child care center costs a family nearly *six* times more than the annual cost of tuition for sending a child to a California State University school and two-thirds more than sending a child to college at a University of California school.[56]



California families have to pay more for child care compared to families throughout the rest of the country. According to a recent study by the Urban Institute, Californians both pay 20% more for child care than the national average, and pay a higher percentage of their annual income for child care than families nationally.[57]

As child care prices swell and child care supply runs thin, low-income children are the hardest hit. A single parent working full-time at minimum wage ($11,960 in 2000) would have to pay two-thirds of her salary to get care for an infant at a licensed child care center. Care for an infant and a preschooler costs nearly $14,000, almost $2,000 more than a full-time minimum wage worker earns.

According to one estimate, a single parent in Los Angeles (where the cost-of-living closely parallels the state average[58]) with an infant and a preschooler would have to earn $45,024 per year—nearly *four* times the minimum wage—to cover the basic costs of child care, housing, food, education, transportation and medical needs.[59] In other words, a single parent who earns less can only afford child care if she sacrifices on other basic necessities, such as the amount of food that she puts on the table for her kids.

Under these circumstances, it is easy to see why so many children are in inadequate care.

Most Parents Have Limited Options

Of course, access to quality child care is a concern for all families. Fewer and fewer families can rely on a stay-at-home parent to provide child care, as social and economic forces bring more and more parents, especially mothers, into the workforce.

Yet even if families can find a way to pay high child care costs, they still face a shortage of child care options. There are approximately four million children under 13 with working parents, but only approximately 820,000 child care slots are available in licensed child care centers and family child care homes.[60] This means that only one child care slot in a licensed facility exists for about every five children potentially in need. This shortage is likely to get worse as welfare reform progresses, with hundreds of thousands of additional kids estimated to need child care by 2002 as their parents leave welfare for work.[61]

'This means that there is only one child care slot in a licensed facility for about every five children potentially in need of child care'

While not every family with working parents may need or want a *licensed* child care setting, these lopsided numbers mean that licensed child care is not a viable option for many working families. Even if one assumes that many working families prefer unlicensed care, experts estimate there is still a shortage of about 1.5 million licensed child care spaces.[62] Demand for licensed care might even be higher than that if more spaces at good quality licensed facilities were actually available.

This shortage is just the tip of the iceberg since so few of even the licensed facilities are actually rated as good quality.[63]

In California, there are particularly critical shortages of licensed child care for: infants; evening and weekend care for parents with non-traditional working hours; after-school care; and care for children with special needs.[64]

Low-Income Neighborhoods Hit by Child Care Shortage

Just as low-income families are hardest hit by the high price of child care, they also suffer disproportionately from child care shortages. The availability of care varies widely from one neighborhood to another, with the biggest shortages facing low-income neighborhoods. A 1997 report concluded that in "some counties, most notably Los Angeles, affluent families are *twice* as likely to find an operating preschool or child care slot than are parents residing in low-income communities."[65]

5: California Falls Short of the Investment in Quality Child Care Needed to Protect Public Safety

Financial Help Unavailable to One Million Eligible Kids

California's investment in child care and early education is far short of what is needed. Total federal and State funding for child care in California is just over $3 billion. With the exception of a few federal programs (Head Start, Early Head Start, and the 21st Century after-school program), California's state government administers all of the programs. Federal funding, however, accounts for about half of the funding of state-administered programs.

'Just as California is falling short in delivering quality child care, it is also falling short of providing all families access to quality child care arrangements'

The largest state-administered child care programs are four programs that provide subsidies—financial aid for children of low-income and primarily working families to attend child care. Two of these programs—California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKS) and the Alternative Payment Program—are essentially "voucher" programs. They allow families to use financial aid for their choice of private child care arrangements, including: license-exempt care such as in-home or out-of-home care with relatives or neighbors; licensed child care centers; and licensed family child care homes. CalWORKS is for families on or working their way off welfare and the Alternative Payment Program is for other low-income working families

The other programs—General Child Care and Development, and State Preschool— pay for families to enroll children only in those child care centers, family child care homes and (generally part-day) preschools that contract directly with the State. The child care centers and family child care homes included here are often referred to as "publicly-funded," "state-subsidized" or "Title V" facilities (Title V is the section of the California Code of Regulations that describes the health, safety and staffing standards which these facilities must meet, which are stricter than the minimum standards for most licensed facilities). (For more details about the state's major child care assistance programs, see Appendix.)

To be eligible for most of these programs, families can be earning no more than 75% of the State Median Income (SMI)

level. With the SMI for a family of three in 2000 at $46,800, the 75% eligibility cut-off was $35,100. State Preschool has a stricter cut-off: it only is available to families earning at or below 60% of the SMI level—$28,080 for a family of three.

California Fails to Provide Affordable Access to Child Care for Too Many Families

The mere existence of quality programs is of limited value unless they are available and affordable to the children who need them. These two issues—quality and access—go hand in hand. And just as California is falling short in delivering quality child care, it is also falling short of providing all families access to quality child care arrangements.

'Of the nearly 1.6 million children of working parents in California eligible to receive financial aid to pay for child care, only 515,000 are being served, according to the California Budget Project. This leaves a "child care access gap" of over *one million eligible kids*'

Of the nearly 1.6 million children of working parents in California eligible to receive financial aid to pay for child care, only 515,000 are being served, according to the California Budget Project. This leaves a "child care access gap" of over *one million eligible kids*.[66] As a result, an estimated 200,000 children are on waiting lists for financial aid,[67] and hundreds of thousands more have not applied, perhaps because either they are unaware that they are eligible or they have not bothered applying because they know no spaces are available.

This gap would be even higher if California did not choose to make ineligible an estimated 140,000 children from working families who could be eligible for child care assistance under federal law.[68] Federal law allows families to be eligible for child care assistance if their incomes are up to 85% of the State Median Income (SMI) level—$39,780 for a family of three in 2000. Yet several years ago California *lowered* its eligibility from the federal 85% level to 75% of the SMI level—$35,100 for a family of three—nearly $5,000 lower than the federal standard.

In practice, because child care assistance programs are so underfunded, funding is generally only available for families with income below 50% of the SMI level—$23,400 for a family of three in 2000.[69]

Of course, not every eligible family may need or want financial aid to pay for child care. Even taking this into account, conservative estimates still reveal a child care access gap that numbers in the hundreds of thousands. Based on several assumptions, including assuming that only *half* of all eligible kids

with working parents (at or below 75% of the SMI level) are interested in help paying for child care, the California Budget Project estimates that 280,000 currently eligible children are in need of child care assistance.[70]

None of these calculations even begin to consider the huge increase in demand expected as welfare reform moves forward. Hundreds of thousands of children of parents moving from welfare to work are likely to need care, and it is not clear if this increased demand will be met with increased child care investments.[71]

Working Families Are Left Behind

Access to child care is hardest for low-income working families who are *not* on welfare. The current child care system treats families with similar incomes differently, depending on whether or not they have ever been enrolled in CalWORKS, the

Proposition 10: A New Source for Child Care Investment and Innovation

Proposition 10 is another source of child care funding. Under this initiative passed in 1998, over $700 million is generated annually through a 50 cents-per-pack tobacco tax, and can be used exclusively for programs that benefit 0 to 5 year olds. Most funding decisions are made at the local level: 80% of the funding is distributed to individual County Children and Families Commissions and 20% is reserved for the State Children and Families Commission. Child care and development is one of the three priority issues identified by Proposition 10 for the State and County Commissions to address.

In practice, Proposition 10 funding is making a difference for child care both in giving local communities the opportunity to pursue innovative strategies and in expanding promising state-level programs. For example, several County Commissions have directed some of their funds to establish local CARES programs, which encourage retention and training of child care staff by tying salary stipends of up to $6,000 to training, education and experience. (See box on CARES, *page 28*.) The State Commission has also pledged funds to partially match local allocations to CARES.

While Proposition 10 is valuable for child care, State policymakers need to be sure not to fall into the trap of thinking Proposition 10 will "take care of" child care. Proposition 10 simply does not provide enough funding to meet child care and all the other needs of young people—including health care, child abuse and neglect and prenatal parent education. In addition, the tobacco tax is a diminishing source of income, the funding is not available for school-age care, and since funding allocations are primarily locally determined, it can not effectively be a source for comprehensive statewide reforms. Still, Proposition 10 raises the profile of child care and early education issues and can be an important source for innovation.

state welfare program. Over the past few years, the State has moved to full funding of the financial aid needed for CalWORKS families to pay for child care, but it continues to underfund the needs of other low-income families. While families on or leaving CalWORKS get child care assistance, many equally low-income working families do not. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, inadequate child care funding for low-income working families who were not on CalWORKS results in "significantly more eligible families than available slots."[72]

Fully funding the child care needs of CalWORKS families is essential. While the State should continue providing the needed CalWORKS child care funding in the future as more families move from welfare to work, California also needs to extend child care assistance to all low-income working families.

'California...still has a long way to go before good quality child care and early education becomes the rule, rather than the exception'

California Shortchanges Quality Investments

Many states have implemented special strategies to improve the quality of child care their children are offered. While California has taken a few promising steps in this direction, it still has a long way to go before good quality child care and early education becomes the rule, rather than the exception.

Out of billions of dollars in State funding for child care, only a small portion is dedicated to what falls under "quality" initiatives in the State budget. Total funding by the California Department of Education identified as "quality" expenditures is $120 million.[77]

A large share of the so-called "quality" spending is not, by many standards, actually being used to promote the kind of good quality care that has been proven to reduce crime. Many of these initiatives are more about meeting minimum health and safety thresholds and administrative needs than about assuring good quality care. For example, over $24 million is to ensure minimal health and safety standards through licensing, nearly $10 million is for facility renovation and repair, $6 million is to bring playground equipment at child care centers up to regulation, $5.3 million is for local child care planning councils, $4 million is to train former CalWORKS recipients to become child care workers, and $1.5 million is for centralized subsidy eligibility lists.

These initiatives are certainly valuable in their own right, and may fall under a broad federal definition of "quality." But they do no represent a focused effort to bring good quality care to more of

The Shrinking Value of Child Care Reimbursement Rates

Publicly-funded child care facilities have a harder time than ever providing quality child care because they have to stretch each dollar thinner. In fact, the amount that the State reimburses them for each low-income child has not kept pace with the cost of living. This reimbursement rate today buys significantly less than it could buy 20 years ago.

While per child funding rates for K-12 students have received numerous cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) since 1981, the reimbursement rate for publicly-funded child care facilities has received only occasional and sometimes partial COLAs.[73] If child care COLAs had kept pace, the reimbursement rate for publicly-funded facilities would be 25% higher.[74] In order to "catch up" to K-12's cost-of-living increases and restore the rate to its original value, publicly-funded facilities need $225 million in increased funding.[75]

Without an increased reimbursement rate, publicly-funded facilities will find it harder to stay open, let alone to provide quality care. The Orange County School District recently stopped operating ten publicly-funded child care centers largely as a result of insufficient funding.[76]

California's children.

Comprehensive Quality Initiatives Needed

The initiatives that are indeed about "quality" are important, but they are inadequately small steps. For example, under an initiative enacted in 2000, $15 million will go annually to counties to promote the retention of child care workers in publicly-funded child care centers. The most popular of such programs is called CARES (Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability), which offers salary stipends to child care workers based on their levels of training and experience. (See BOX on CARES and WAGES Plus, *page 28*.) Several counties are already implementing retention initiatives using local funds. The $15 million in state funding can expand the pre-existing efforts in several counties and encourage other counties to develop similar initiatives.

CARES could make a big difference in child care quality if it were implemented on a large enough scale. However, funding for this initiative is woefully inadequate. It covers only a small portion of child care workers (those who work in publicly-funded centers), and $15 million divided among 58 counties statewide is far from the investment needed to keep qualified child care workers from moving out of the field into higher-paid professions.[78] For example, in Alameda County alone, the CARES initiative developed prior to enactment of the state initiative, cost

nearly $4 million in county Proposition 10 funding. Its cost is expected to rise as applications increase.

While accreditation alone does not guarantee good quality, particularly given high staff turnover rates even at accredited facilities,[81] the accreditation initiative enacted in 2000 is another positive step. It provides $5 million annually to help child care centers and family child care homes get accredited. However, it only provides enough funding to cover up to 4% of licensed child care centers and 3% of family child care homes per year.[82] At that rate, it would take 23 years to reach the 97% accreditation level achieved by child care centers in the U.S. military.[83]

CARES & WAGES+: Promising Strategies to Ensure Quality Child Care Staff

Several local communities in California have already taken positive steps to attract and retain quality child care staff. The State needs to build on these kinds of investments, so existing local programs can be expanded to cover as many qualified child care teachers and workers as possible and other communities can start similar programs.

More than 15 counties are in the process of developing and implementing an initiative known as CARES or Compensation and Retention Encourage Stability. Through CARES, child care teachers and workers can receive stipends from hundreds of dollars up to $6,000 per year based on an individual's level of education and experience. Generally, all applicants must meet minimum education and training qualifications, commit to at least 21 hours of continuing education per year, and have been at their current job for at least a year. CARES is generally open to a full range of caregivers, including home-based caregivers, family child care providers, and center-based staff.

CARES programs are being funded primarily through County Proposition 10 commissions, with some matching support from the State Proposition 10 Commission (see box on Proposition 10, *page 25*.). Beyond that, a few counties (San Francisco, Marin) secured funds through their county Board of Supervisors, and the State provides another $15 million annually for counties to develop retention initiatives such as CARES.[79]

The City and County of San Francisco has also provided increased compensation for child care staff through its Wages+ program. Through Wages+, San Francisco has budgeted over $4 million to raise the wages of staff at child care centers that serve low-income children. The program enables these centers to raise wages nearly $2 per hour, with a minimum salary set at $9 per hour and wage floors increasing for staff at all levels of education and experience.[80]

6: Penny-Wise, Pound-Foolish Policy Choices: Wasting Money and Lives

Do investments in quality child care and early education bust budgets or save money? Extensive analysis of the High/Scope Perry Preschool program, and recent results available from the ongoing, publicly-funded Chicago Child-Parent Centers demonstrate overwhelmingly that these investments not only help kids get the right start, reduce crime and save lives, but also save tax dollars.

Rutgers University economist W. Steven Barnett has estimated that the High/Scope Perry program produced nearly $150,000 per participant in savings from reduced crime alone.[84] Even after discounting these savings to take into account interest which could have been earned on the preschool investment while the High/Scope Perry toddlers were growing up, Barnett concluded that the savings were more than $70,000 per participant in crime-related savings alone, and a total of $88,000 once welfare, tax and other savings are included.[85]

In short, *every dollar invested in the High/Scope Perry program returned $7.16 to the public*. These savings count only the benefits to the public at large — in reduced costs of crime, welfare and remedial education and in added revenues from taxes paid when the preschoolers became adult workers—without even taking into account the enormous direct benefits to the kids themselves.[86]

If all three and four year olds from low income families in California today attended programs like Perry Preschool for two years this would add up to an estimated *$19 billion* in government savings.[87] And this is just what California would save by serving kids who are currently three and four. If California made a long term commitment to a program like the Perry Preschool, the savings would multiply.

A recent RAND Corporation study found that even after excluding all benefits to crime victims and other citizens, and discounting to account for alternative investments, savings to government alone from providing the Perry Preschool services would come to *twice* the program's costs.[88]

'If all three and four year olds from low income families in California today attended programs like Perry Preschool for two years this would add up to an estimated *$19 billion* in government savings'

Economists, looking at this, other research and their own analyses, have concluded that spending on early childhood programs are among the best investments government can make in education. As James Heckman at the University of Chicago put it, "skills [including social skills] acquired early on make later learning easier."[89] William Gale and Isabel. Sawhill of the Brookings Institution, wrote that investing in early childhood education provides government and society "with estimated rates of return that would make a venture capitalist envious."[90]

'Each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime could save the country between $1.7 million and $2.3 million'

A 1997 study by Professor Mark A. Cohen of Vanderbilt University estimated that each high-risk youth prevented from adopting a life of crime could save the country between $1.7 million and $2.3 million.[91]

Recent Findings Prove Investments Save Money

Recent results prove that similar savings can also be realized when quality child care and early education programs are brought to full scale. As briefly described earlier, Chicago's Child-Parent Center (CPC) federal and state-funded program has been providing quality child care and parent training to almost 100,000 at-risk kids since 1967.[92] A study followed almost 1,000 children attending the centers in 1985-86. Years later, compared to children with similar characteristics who attended all-day kindergartens but not the CPC preschool centers, the CPC children were only half as likely to have been arrested two or more times as juveniles and were more likely to have graduated from high school.

Researchers concluded that the program saves the government, the public, and the participants combined, almost $5 for every dollar invested. Savings to the government alone are $2.31 for every dollar invested, and fully half of those savings come from preventing crime. When reduced adult crime and reduced welfare dependency savings are later included, the savings will be even greater.[93]

The bottom line: investments in quality child care are money-savers, not budget-busters.

7: Recommendations From the Front Lines of the Battle Against Crime: A Call For Action

Those on the front lines fighting crime are less concerned with political ideology than with hard-nosed practical solutions. They insist on doing what really works to fight crime.

Everyone agrees, of course, that dangerous criminals need to be locked up. But the people who work day-in and day-out to track down, arrest, and prosecute criminals know that this vital defense is only a stop-gap measure. And crime victims know better than anyone.

In a recent survey of California sheriffs, police chiefs, and district attorneys, 95% agreed that if we fail to make greater investments in educational child care and after school programs now, "we will pay far more later" in crime, welfare and other costs. When asked to select which of several strategies would have "the *biggest* impact on reducing youth violence," 75% picked providing more educational child care and after school programs—*four* times as many as those who selected hiring more police officers to investigate juvenile crimes, prosecuting more juveniles as adults, or installing more metal detectors and surveillance cameras in schools.

'The good news is that investing in quality child care and early education really works to reduce crime. Now we need to galvanize the political will to convert this proven theory into action'

The good news is that investing in quality child care and early education really works to reduce crime. Now we need to galvenize the political will to convert this proven theory into action.

Today, our State's leading sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victims are calling on California's public officials to make sorely needed investments to provide access to quality child care and early education.

The State's leading law enforcement organizations have joined in the call for quality child care and early education. The California State Sheriffs' Association, California Police Chiefs Association, California District Attorneys Association, and California Peace Officers' Association have all adopted the FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *CALIFORNIA* resolution calling on government to guarantee all kids access to quality child care as a key step to reduce crime and violence.

Across America, over 1,000 sheriffs, police chiefs, district attorneys and crime victims who are part of the FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS national organization are calling for state and federal action to increase access to quality child care and early education. National organizations including The National Sheriffs' Association, Major Cities [Police] Chiefs, Fraternal Order of Police, and the National Organization for Victim Assistance have joined in the call.

Government's most fundamental responsibility is to protect the public safety. It can't meet that responsibility without making sure that all families have access to quality child care and early education during the hours when parents are working.

'California is falling short of the investment in quality child care needed to meet its responsibility to protect the public safety'

Investments that help kids get the right start in life so they never turn to crime should be a top priority of the state and federal government. At the federal level, that means increasing investments in federally-run programs like Head Start and Early Head Start, and providing more federal child care funding to the states. But here in California, government can't meet its responsibilities by wishing someone else, the federal government, were doing the job.

In the years ahead, the State government should take the following steps to provide quality child care for California's children:

Access

- Increase funding to make financial aid to pay for child care and early education available to all eligible low-income working families within the next 5 years.
- Make quality preschool programs readily available for all three and four year olds.
- Offer financial aid to pay for child care to families making up to 85% of the State Median Income level—about $40,000 for a family of three—rather than continuing to exclude families making over 75% of the State Median Income level.
- Expand loan programs to assist in the creation of new child care facilities and expand capacity within existing facilities.
- Provide training and incentives to encourage the hiring of

bilingual staff in communities with non-English speaking parents.

Quality

- Enable child care providers to afford the real cost of providing quality care by increasing the amount that the government reimburses them to serve each low-income child. As a start, increase the reimbursement rate for publicly-funded child care facilities to catch up with the increased cost of living over the past 20 years, and to keep pace with increases in the cost of living in the years ahead.

- Encourage the training and retention of child care staff through increased wages and benefits, for example by expanding the CARES program.

Health and Safety

- Promote compliance with health and safety standards by increasing regulatory oversight of child care facilities, including increased frequency of inspections and increased state-level inspection staff to conduct them.

Planning

- Adopt a Child Care Master Plan to establish long-range priorities for child care.

'It is time for California's leaders to lay out a plan...to assure that all families, especially those children who are most at risk of going astray, have access to quality child care and early education at a price they can afford.'

Conclusion

California is falling short of the investment in quality child care and early education needed to meet its responsibility to protect the public safety. That shortfall is part of a gaping crime-prevention deficit that jeopardizes the safety of every Californian.

It is time for California's leaders to lay out a plan to eliminate that deficit by providing communities with the resources to assure that all families, especially those children who are most at risk of going astray, have access to quality child care and early education at a price they can afford.

Making this investment in kids will save taxpayers money, save lives and make every California family safer from crime.

Appendix

Overview of Major California Child Care Assistance Programs

California has four major state-administered child care financial aid programs: CalWORKS; Alternative Payment Program; General Child Care and Development; and State Preschool. Other programs that provide child care assistance focus on specialized populations, including for migrant workers (Migrant Day Care), teen parents (CalSafe), school-age kids (Extended Day Care, After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program), the handicapped, and community colleges.

CalWORKS and the Alternative Payment Program are essentially "voucher" programs, where eligible families may choose the form of child care for which they want to use financial aid. In these programs, the State does not contract directly with child care providers. Instead, local entities such as county education offices, school districts, or non-profit organizations contract with the state to manage the distribution of child care subsidies. These local distribution programs have limited funding levels. Eligible families apply for assistance through the local programs. If funding is available, then the local program contracts with the child care provider of the family's choosing. Currently, there is sufficient funding available to provide assistance for all CalWORKS families, but not for all other low-income working families.

Under the General Child Care and Development and State Preschool programs, eligible families apply to specific child care facilities. The State contracts directly with these facilities. These are often referred to as "publicly-funded," "state-subsidized" or "Title V" facilities (after the section of the California Code of Regulations that describes the standards these facilities must meet). State Preschool is a part-day program.

Family income: With the exception of State Preschool, families must be earning at or below 75% of the state median income (SMI) level to be eligible for subsidies. The eligibility level for State Preschool is lower—60% of the SMI.[94] Accordingly, for a family of three, with the 2000 SMI level at $46,800, the eligibility cut-off for most programs was $35,100, except State Preschool which was $28,080

Age of Children: The age of children eligible for each program varies General Child Care and Development is for children from infancy through age 14. CalWORKS and the Alternative Payment Program are for infancy through age 13 State Preschool is for ages 3 and 4.

Working families: State Preschool is the only program that does not require that recipients be *working* families.

Priority: Under CalWORKS, child care subsidies are guaranteed for all eligible families for two years after a family stops receiving welfare payments; after that, a family may continue receiving subsidies as long as funding is available. In the other programs, subsidies for eligible families are not guaranteed. Without sufficient funding available to cover all eligible families,

priority goes to families with the lowest incomes and in some circumstances to families with children who have been identified as being at risk of abuse or neglect. With the exception of those families in CalWORKS, in practice families earning over 50% of the SMI have virtually no chance of receiving subsidies due to underfunding.

Co-payments: In CalWORKS, the Alternate Payment Program, and General Child Care and Development, no co-payments are required for families earning below 50% of the SMI level, and a sliding scale for co-payments kicks in as family income rises to between 50 and 75% of the SMI level. No co-payments are required for State Preschool.

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